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SPEECH OF GEN. HIRAM WALBRIDGE.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATURE:

In a government dependent for its stability on the virtue, integrity, and intelligence of its citizens,—where individual political equality, constitutes its distinguishing characteristic, it is the incumbent duty of each citizen to contribute whatever lays in his power, to promote the general interest and advance the common good. More especially is this the case, at a period like the present, when the nation is passing through one of those terrible ordeals, which is to decide for good or evil, its destiny, and to determine its relations to foreign powers. But whoever essays to discharge this obligation, must remember, the measure of his usefulness, will be determined by his influence, in shaping the action of his fellow citizens; and it will be well for him to remember, that each citizen enjoys prerogatives equal to his own, and is as capable of deciding, what is best for the public interest, as himself. How augmented that responsibility becomes whenever a citizen speaks, not to the people directly, but to their representatives—those to whom they have confided the administration of their government, and the control of their interests. I feel the full force of this responsibility as I stand in the august presence of those, to whom the free intelligent electors of this great “Empire State,” have confided, for the time being, the control of their public interests, and the protection of their public affairs.

BENEFIT OF DISCUSSION.

In the frequent interchange of ideas and in the discussion by their representatives, of the policy best to be pursued by a great people, in order to advance their interests, and contribute to their renown, the public mind is aroused to action, and the public judgment stimulated to the adoption of a policy that either advances or retards the growth of the State, since in government as in all other human enterprises, the forces which encounter each other, are seldom stationary, but are either advancing to a higher perfection or deteriorating below the era, in which they are called into exercise. Whoever attempts to group together the great events which have marked our own political history, since the inauguration of our existing internecine strife, must be struck with the great advance in public sentiment that has been made, in reference to many political questions, which constituted the elements of discussion among the people previous to the war. I shall not now stop to inquire, at what fearful cost this experience has been purchased, but yet, I cannot hide from my vision the spirits of more than 300,000 able, athletic men, who have gone down in the pride of their early manhood, sacrifices to the foul spirit of rebellion, which sought to overthrow the great edifice of American constitutional freedom. Nor shall I forget the vast expenditure of blood and treasure, which has marked this struggle, nor the still more ennobling testimony, by which a free people have voluntarily assumed burdens, and placed their chosen sons upon the altar, in order to preserve their government, and transmit it unimpaired to those

who shall come after them, in the same unbroken integrity with which they received it from the fathers who laid its foundations.

STRENGTH OF REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENT.

The friends of free institutions have always claimed the ability of a representative government to successfully resist foreign aggression, since, in such a contest, each individual was defending his own fireside, and resisting the power that was striking at the government of which he constituted a member. Yet it has been a question, whether such a government contained within itself, elements of strength if assailed by its own citizens, whenever faction should be sufficiently powerful to inaugurate rebellion and revolt. Our experience has clearly shown, that republican institutions are not only able to resist the aggression of foreign nations, but they are equally formidable in suppressing treason, whenever any portion of their citizens, attempt to overthrow the common government. Great as have been our successes on the sea, and on the land, gigantic as have been the triumphs that have marked the advance of our victorious armies, over the Insurgent States, the voluntary action of the people of the United States, on the 8th of November last, in again investing their rulers with the elements of power necessary to the continued prosecution of the war, until peace is permanently restored, constitutes one of those stupendous events, which is to mark not simply the destiny of this republic, but to exercise its influence on the destinies of our race. However conflicting the opinions of men may have been ahtecedent to that event, all must admit that the result c i that occasion, assured the people of the United States, that their constitutional government is not to be overthrown, either by rebellion, and treason at home, or the active belligerent sympathy of nations abroad.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION.

The contest in the field may be decided by the chances of battle, or the varied casualties that give the standard of victory to one or the other of the contending parties. But the moral contest which marked the presidential campaign of last year, and terminated in the Union victory, was a contest that decided the question of free republican government—decided that question affirmatively, in favor of consolidating under one government in the future, as they had existed in the past, all the States that constitute the members of this great and powerful Federal Union. This triumphant expression on the part of the people, has already been justly interpreted, by the citizens of the Rebellious States, as well as by those who reside in the constitutional North; and equally interpreted by the observant statesmen of Europe.

PUBLIC OPINION ABROAD.

The sympathy of the industrious masses of the Eastern continent, has, since the origin of the strife, been with the United States. Yet we regret to say, the sympathies of their aristocratic and governing classes, have always favored disaster to the constitutional arms; and they have fondly looked forward to some untoward event, by which these American States were to be severed, this Union dissolved, this grand republic disintegrated, and the melancholy spectaеe which greets the vision of the patriot in

South America, re-inaugurated on the northern section of the Western Hemisphere.

EVILS OF DISMEMBERMENT.

They are perfectly conscious, that when once the work of disintegration begins there will be no limit, and that the causes that are sufficiently powerful to procure a separation between the North and South, would in time produce another separation between the East and West, until at last the Federal Union—which in the brief period of seventy years, had become the rival of the great powers of Europe, whose nationality and strength was the result of centuries of effort, and of time—would be severed and broken; and while there might still remain fragmentary republics, or portions of the once grand Federal Union, that homogeneous political structure, which was asserting its power throughout the globe as the government of the United States, would be entirely broken, and broken forever.

CAUSES OF THE REBELLION.

We have adverted to the change of public sentiment, that has resulted from this interneceine strife. But no where has this change been so manifest, as in its relation to the cause which produced the war, and enabled the rebels to protract their resistance during these three long years of bloody, desolating, and inhuman strife. It was asserted by eminent statesmen, antecedent to the war, that there was a necessarily irrepressible conflict between the North and South growing out of the institution of slavery. But this declaration was violently assailed by a large and respectable minority, who insisted that as the government had successfully prospered since the adoption of the Constitution until the breaking out of the rebellion, by the recognition of slavery, in our political system, it was possible to suppress the rebellion and restore the ancient order of things as they existed antecedent to the rebellion. Three years of war have conclusively shown, that the constitutional cause prevails, not more by the power of arms and its material forces than by the recognition of those moral forces on which the permanent prosperity of human institutions can alone be based.

POLITICAL MORALITY.

However men may differ on mere political questions, no party can permanently control the administration of a great, industrious, and powerful people, which do not address itself as well to their moral instincts, as to their material interests. If this be true, a party, however formidable in numbers, however gigantic in intellect, however historical in the past, which seeks to represent the popular sentiment and control the popular judgment in this Christian age, must recognize in its maxims and policy, the observance of those moral principles by which alone the permanent tranquillity and interests of the nation can be secured. As a member of that once grand old democratic organization, which for three-quarters of a century impressed its policy on the legislation of the country, I regret to say the total disregard of these elementary truths, at the last election, placed that organization in a minority, from which it will never again lead its adherents to triumph and victory until it shall recognize this fundamental truth—that morality and justice are indispensable requisites in securing the popular approval, and in directing the popular action.

FEDERAL CONSTITUTION.

In laying the foundations of the Federal Government, the framers of the Constitution wisely provided for the amendment of that instrument, if experience should demonstrate the necessity for such action; and in the generation which witnessed its adoption, as the organic law of the American people, this power was exercised upon three respective occasions. That no amendments since then have taken place, indicates the wisdom and judgment of the powers then delegated by the people to their government; and also demonstrates how averse the people are to these organic changes, except for the most important objects. But a cause which is sufficiently powerful to engage thirty millions of people in a contest of arms, which has piled up a debt measured only by thousands of millions, which weighs heavily on the present productive industry of the country, and mortgages its future, is one of sufficient moment to demand the earnest consideration of all classes of the people. These great events have changed the entire condition of our public affairs, and it only remains for us to bring the organic law in harmony with the interests of the people and the moral sentiments of the age. This revolution would have been avoided, if those who alleged they had grievances had sought their remedies in a constitutional manner. For if any real grievances had really been found to exist, such is the generosity of the American people, and so earnest their desire to do justice to all sections, that on the presentation of facts clearly demonstrating an injustice to any portion of the country, the constitutional majority requisite to amend the organic law, would have been readily secured. But in failing to adopt these peaceful means, and resorting to the bloody arbitrament of the sword, the rebellious leaders of the South have produced a change in public opinion, which is not to be arrested until the cause which produced the war is for ever removed.

CONFLICTING CIVILIZATIONS.

It is not to be disguised, that not only since the early settlement of the country, but certainly since the organization of the Federal Government, two conflicting systems of civilization have struggled for its supremacy. And during all this period, while the struggle has at times been bitter and acrimonious, it was reserved for the presidential election of 1860, to furnish a pretext on the part of those who represented the Southern civilization to attempt the overthrow of the government itself. As the contest draws to a close in behalf of our civilization,—which recognizes the rights of labor, of a free and untrammeled press, and individual and political equality, we mean to mark this triumph of our arms by the employment of peaceful agencies in extirpating from the body politic, that refractory element which, in times past, has disturbed all our legislation, until at last it became sufficiently powerful to strike at the very existence of the American Union.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL REMEDY.

Let us enquire how this can be best accomplished, and see if the remedy does not exist without violence and without bloodshed, and in strict conformity with the terms of the organic law.

No greater revolution in the public sentiment of any country has ever

transpired, than that which has thus far marked the action of the American people since the inauguration of the rebellion, in reference to the institution of slavery. Not four years ago, Congress, by a unanimous vote, was not only willing to guarantee slavery in the States in which it existed, but was also willing to amend the Constitution, so that it could never be disturbed. To-day no intelligent man believes there will be any other termination to the existing rebellion, than the complete extermination of this refractory element from our body politic. Already the people of Western Virginia, Maryland and Missouri, in the most emphatic manner, have expunged the odious system from their State organizations; while the people of Tennessee, in their recent State convention, in the very first article of their new constitution, declared—

“Section 1. Slavery and involuntary servitude, except for the punishment of crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, are hereby for ever abolished and prohibited.”

“Section 2. The legislature shall make no law recognizing the right of property in man.”

The President of the United States, in the legitimate exercise of his prerogative as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, has, in aid of the forces of the Federal Government, for the suppression of the rebellion, proclaimed universal emancipation in the rebellious States. A change in our political system, so fundamental, and which is to guarantee freedom to four millions of people hitherto held in bondage—a people whom it was made a crime to instruct—should be accompanied by the most imposing ceremonies which our political system admits.

BILL BEFORE CONGRESS.

To secure that object, a bill is pending in Congress, providing for an amendment to the constitution, which shall forever prohibit slavery hereafter in the United States. How the question will be decided at this Session, is acknowledged to be doubtful, so nearly is the House of Representatives supposed to be divided; but that its defeat or passage at this juncture is pregnant with tremendous consequences for good or evil, is admitted by all.

I am here, gentlemen of the Committee, in respectful obedience to your invitation, to give the reasons which, in my judgment, renders the speedy passage of the contemplated measure by the existing Congress desirable for the best interests of the country.

Since the introduction of the measure in the first session of the present Congress, the whole people have passed judgment upon it by their action in the presidential canvass, in the re-election of President Lincoln, thereby justifying his issuance of the great act of emancipation of January 1st, 1863, which is to signalize for all coming time, his first administration.

CONSTITUTIONAL POWER.

I propose to inquire first, whether the power to make the proposed amendment exists; and secondly, to present the reasons which render immediate action desirable.

The tenth article of the Federal Constitution provides that “the powers *not delegated* to the United States by the Constitution *nor prohibited* by it.

to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." This expression of the will of the people, through their authorized agents, precisely defines their relations to the Union, and to their respective States, and its ratification by the States, as Sovereign communities, representing the people, was another act of formal surrender and reservation, of political power, precisely and accurately defined and expressed. Thus it is that the government of the Union, in the execution of the delegated powers, became the direct government of the people, personally compulsory upon every member of the community; and thus too, it is, that the States respectively and the people have retained all power, not thus delegated, subject only to the limitation implied in section 4, article 4, which clothes the Government of the Union with the power, and imposes upon it the duty to guarantee to each State a republican form of government, and to protect it from invasion from without, and violence within.

Fortunately, however, the framers of the Constitution did not leave the authority to amend that instrument to implication, but in express terms they provided for all contingencies in the future by designating the manner in which amendments may be made to the fundamental law. That provision was so important as to be embraced in a single article, called the Fifth and was in these words:

"The Congress, whenever two-thirds of both houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose amendments to this Constitution, or on the application of the Legislature of two-thirds of the several States, shall call a convention for proposing amendments, which in either case shall be valid, to all intents and purposes, as part of this Constitution, when ratified by the Legislature of three-fourths of the several States, or by convention of three-fourths thereof, as the one or the other mode of ratification may be proposed by the Congress: Provided that no amendment which may be made prior to the year one thousand eight hundred and eight, shall in any manner affect the first and fourth clauses in the ninth section of the first article; and that no State without its consent shall be deprived of its equal suffrage in the Senate."

It will thus be seen that the power of amendment is broad, general and comprehensive.

In conformity with this power various amendments have heretofore been made.

AMENDMENTS HERETOFORE MADE.

Some of these amendments were additions to the Constitution, explanatory of what was regarded obscure, while others were direct and positive changes in that instrument; yet when ratified by three-fourths of the States and having been recommended by two-thirds of Congress, these amendments became as binding as any of the original articles in the Constitution. But two solitary exceptions are named which could not be amended—first, that article referring to the importation of slaves, was not to be changed prior to the year 1808; second, no State should be deprived of its equal representation in the Senate, without its own consent. These two are the only exceptions provided for in that instrument, which cannot be changed; and for the purpose of this discussion they are not material. Now, while there have been three amendments of the Constitution, adopted during our entire political history, various propositions looking to other changes have

been made, but not having received the requisite two-thirds vote in Congress, they failed. But the right of amendment has never been questioned, until at this era, when some of the friends of human bondage, recognizing that in no other way can they resist the overthrow by the American people of the system of slavery, they now insist that the power to change the Constitution does not exist, or, if it exists, its exercise is fraught with incalculable mischief.

ACTION OF THE THIRTY-SEVENTH CONGRESS.

Who fails to remember that in the last term of the thirty-seventh Congress, that body insisted upon the passage of a resolution, having for its object an amendment of the Constitution, for ever interdicting any interference by Congress with slavery in the States. This resolution passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 133 to 65, and in the Senate by a vote of 24 to 12, securing the support of the entire South and their allies in the North; those only opposing it who were adverse to giving to the Constitution the power of rendering permanent this institution. All who insisted upon perpetuating slavery voted affirmatively, and that it should be placed like that clause of the Constitution which provides that no State shall be deprived of its representation in the Senate without its own consent, so this resolution provided that Congress should recommend to the people an amendment to the Constitution for ever guaranteeing this institution of human slavery. This action on the part of those then favoring the institution should conclusively control their action now, since they thereby conceded the constitutional power, and are for ever debarred by that action from alleging that that power does not exist. For if Congress has the right to propose an amendment to the Constitution, which shall for ever interdict any interference with slavery, does not the same power carry with it the right to abolish the institution, if Congress shall see fit to so recommend by a two-third vote, and that vote shall be ratified in three-fourths of the States, acting either through their Legislatures or conventions of the people, as is provided in the Constitution? Notwithstanding this vote—so recently as the commencement of the rebellion—which secured the action of all the Democratic members of the House of Representatives at that time, it is painful to witness that this record so recently made is now so thoroughly ignored.

PENDLETON'S RECORD.

And he who was but recently a candidate for the Vice-Presidency of the United States on behalf of the opposition to the Union cause, has addressed an argument to the present House of Representatives, contending that the power does not exist to amend the Constitution in this particular; yet among those recorded as having recognized this power providing for the perpetuation of slavery is to be found the name of that honorable member. Such stultification in so brief a period only demonstrates how powerful are the influences of party, and how, in the heat and vigor of debate, members forget their own record, and under the pressure of the party drill ignore their previous action.

EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS.

No government could meet the requirements of the present age, that

either did not provide for its amendment, or did not actually make the amendments that the necessities of the times demanded. The English Constitution being nothing more than a record of immemorial usages, that Constitution is continually subjected to change as society makes new developments requiring modifications in existing relations. And although the French government recognizes an organized system, who does not realize that the French people are continually modifying their government to meet the accumulating demands of the age. What better illustration how a great government shapes its policy in accordance with the interests of the generation in which it acts, than the recent emancipation, by the Czar of Russia, of the serfs of his extended empire. In whatever quarter of the world our attention is directed, governments are viewing with each other to bring their requirements in harmony with the interests of the people, and the civilization of the age. It is only in the Congress of the United States that an attempt is made to prevent the amendment of our organic law, necessary to bring the government in harmony with the moral sentiments of the people and their material interests.

That government is most perfect which responds to the voice of its citizens as they demand improvements in their organic law, making their system more perfect as civilization advances, and as the people are more thoroughly qualified for free institutions. Who will say that the government which was adequate at the commencement of this century, would be adequate at the present time, in view of the rapid advance that has been made in all the great departments of human life? What have we not witnessed in this brief period? The elevation of the press to a commanding power and eminence in the state not recognized when the government was called into existence—the single development of this power in its relation to society would justify changes in the organic law—the application of steam to locomotion—the multiplication of the hands of human labor by the same instrumentality, and the introduction of electricity, throwing a girdle around the earth in less than forty minutes. While a people advance themselves in all the great departments of human life, and strength, and power, there should also be improvements in their government commensurate with their own advancement. Government is not a simple creation, it is the result of growth; and that government is best which adapts itself most kindly to the requirements of its own citizens.

What are the facts in reference to this question of slavery, and the demands now made upon the American people for its extirpation from our body politic? All the enlightened nations of Europe have proscribed it. And if the Congress of the United States shall fail to banish it from our political system, how long a period will transpire before those so-called Confederate states now resisting the Constitutional government, will fail to be recognized by those great powers of Europe, if the rebels offer slavery as the price of their recognition?

LOUIS NAPOLEON.

The sagacious Emperor of the French thoroughly comprehends the deep-seated hostility of the French people to the institution of slavery. This is abundantly evinced by the action of France in the abolition of the institution, in all her colonies, at an early date. With this fact before us, who

believes that, when we shall have failed to pass this constitutional amendment for ever interdicting slavery, if the rebel President Davis should tender the abolition of slavery as the price of recognition, the French Emperor would hesitate to ratify so profitable an arrangement, if he thereby could also secure valuable commercial treaties with the South, giving the French people the supremacy of the article of cotton, through which these Southern leaders hoped at the commencement of the war to secure the favorable intervention of foreign governments.

SOUTHERN RECOGNITION.

In one of the ablest arguments ever submitted to the American people, the Hon. Robt. J. Walker, (under date of September 30, 1864, from London,) stated he believed that Louis Napoleon, had at one time determined to recognize the South. He adds with proper caution that, although such was his conviction, he did not know the fact. But in a recent conversation with that distinguished statesman, he informed me that he had positive and authentic information that, in the event of Gen. McClellan's election, in our last presidential canvass, the French Emperor had determined not only to recognize the independence of the South, but that a most able paper, giving his reasons for such action, had been prepared under his direction, addressed to all the leading governments in Europe, soliciting their coöperation in that event.

ALEXANDER OF RUSSIA.

The only real rival of Napoleon in Europe is Alexander II, Czar of Russia. That monarch is now at the head of more than one hundred millions of people, and is introducing throughout all his vast dominions all the improvements of modern times. Since his elevation to the throne, he has introduced a system of general education into Russia, so as to elevate and enlighten his people and vastly extend the area and power of civilization. But his great act is the emancipation, of thirty millions of Russian slaves, which has been carried into actual and successful operation by an imperial ukase, issued against the powerful opposition of the nobility, and most of the wealthy classes, of Russia to whom these slaves belonged as serfs of the soil, which they cultivated by unrequited labor. This great Emancipation edict—but still more its complete success, has given to the Czar an unbounded influence and popularity in Russia, while it has vastly increased the prestige and power of his name in Europe and throughout the world.

If Louis Napoleon, his great rival, recognizing the independence of the South, can induce them to abolish slavery, he too will have greatly augmented his power, influence, and popularity in France, Europe, Mexico, and Spanish America. If then we now reject the proposed amendment, abolishing slavery throughout the Union, is there not great fear that Louis Napoleon will avail himself of the occasion to induce the South to abolish slavery, as a condition of the recognition of their independence by France?

Slavery has become so demoralized in the South, as to have lost all pecuniary value there. And it is evident from the official documents of Jefferson Davis, from the language of his organs, the debates and proceedings in the Confederate Congress, and the promulgated opinion of Gen. Lee,

that the insurgent authorities, civil and military, are willing to abolish what is left of slavery in the South, as a condition of the recognition of their independence by the French Emperor. That recognition they know means a commercial treaty between France and the South, especially for the supply of cotton, it means a breach of our blockade by the French navy, and can end only in war, in aid of the South, by France, against the United States; to be followed probably in that event by England. Now we can avoid all these hazards by the immediate adoption of the proposed amendment abolishing slavery throughout the country. Then there will be nothing left on which the insurgent authority can act; then our cause will be immensely strengthened in Europe; and slavery, having been already abolished by the amendment of our fundamental law, Louis Napoleon, will have no power to array France or any other country against us on that question.

ENGLAND'S POLICY.

If the recognition of the independence of the South by France upon their doing what we had refused to do, is effected, is there not equal danger that England would join France in that act of recognition? England in that event would have a far greater trade with the South than France, and has a much deeper interest in the cotton question, consuming nearly ten times as many pounds of the great staple. It is the slavery question alone, and the deep feeling of the popular masses on that subject, that has prevented England from uniting with France long since in recognizing the independence of the South. But when our position shall be reversed on this subject, when we shall have refused to abolish slavery, by rejecting the proposed amendment, and the insurgent authorities, stimulated by our folly, shall immediately proceed to expunge the institution from their Confederacy and thus vastly increase their armies, is there not every reason to believe that England would join France in the act of recognition? The Confederates, and their allies in France and England, would then unfurl the Anti-slavery banner, which we should have discarded, and appeal with irresistible force to the masses in their favor. And what of Russia, in such an event? One of the chief reasons of our support by the Russian Czar has been the supposed coincidence between him and ourselves, as regards the abolition of slavery. But if we separate from him, on this question, and the South adopt his policy, by the abolition of slavery, is there not every reason to believe that he too, thus rebuked by us and sustained by the South, would unite with France and England in the recognition? And what of Holland, Denmark, and Sweden, which have all abolished slavery in all their colonies? What of Italy, from the Alps and the Appenines, to Naples and Sicily, whose soil for many centuries has never been polluted by the foot of a slave? What of Rome and the Pope, still a mighty power, in Europe and the world? Look at the correspondence between His Holiness and Jefferson Davis—look at the numerous papal bulls against slavery, and then ask yourselves whether, in the event of our refusal to abolish the institution, and its consequent abolition by the South, will not and cannot the Pope arouse against us the whole Catholic population of Europe and the world? And what of Germany, so hostile now, and for many centuries, to slavery—that never held a slave—that never had a slave-holder, or engaged in the infamous African slave-trade—what will Germany, now our

enthusiastic friend, say on the subject? Why, from the Baltic and German ocean to the Adriatic, from the Elbe and the Rhine to the Danube, Germany will condemn our action, if she does not join our enemy. And what of Switzerland, which for four centuries has successfully maintained the contest for republican freedom against surrounding despotisms—What will she say on such a question? Will she not feel as if we had written the epitaph of Republics throughout the world; while even the Alps echo the mournful requiem? And shall we not indeed have stricken down the champions of freedom throughout Europe and re-inaugurated the reign of despotic power?

EXTRA SESSION OF CONGRESS.

Indeed, such vast importance, do I attach to immediate action on this subject, that if the amendment unfortunately should fail now, I trust that President Lincoln will immediately issue his proclamation, convening the new Congress, and give this as the principal motive for such action. Let that proclamation go to Europe, with the same steamer that takes the news of the rejection of the amendment, and possibly it may save us from European intervention. But why incur such a fearful hazard, when it can all be avoided by immediate favorable action on the question? These are revolutionary times, when delays are always dangerous. If we postpone action until another session, the returning steamer may bring us the fatal news,—*it is too late!* How often before have these ominous words sounded in the streets of Paris, and how soon again may the imperial mandate fulminate against us another *coup d'état*?

CHANGE OF ISSUE.

To defend and perpetuate the institution of slavery, were the alleged reasons of the rebellious leaders of the South for their attempt to overthrow the government at the origin of the war. What is their present proposed action? Already the President of the Confederacy, its ablest commander, and all its leading statesmen, are advocating the abolition of the institution of slavery, in order to secure foreign recognition, and to strengthen their armies with the emancipated slaves. It is thus seen, the rebels have changed their position since the origin of the rebellion. First, insisting that their action was indispensable in order to protect slavery; and second, now urging that slavery be immediately abolished, if thereby they can secure the division of these American States, and the consequent dismemberment of the American Union. What are the facts? Here are four millions of slaves—a class hitherto recognized under the Constitution, as persons in the congressional representation, and consequently in the legislation of the country, but recognized as property, when in the hands and under the tyranny of their masters. The rebel leaders announce their willingness to give them their freedom, in order to secure their aid in separating the Union. Shall the government of the United States, fail to avail itself of its privilege of giving them their liberty and incorporate them into the armies, now sustaining the constitutional cause, in favor of the unity of the republic? It is by no means my purpose, to inquire how much we lost, during the first two years of our struggle, when we failed to avail ourselves, of the services of the slaves of the South, in the idle and vain endeavor to appease and mitigate the resentment of the slaveholders, then actively in arms against the government of the United States.

Time is indispensable in all great human enterprises. And it was early evi-

dent, the public mind required time to overcome the prejudices, which necessarily resulted from the abject degradation to which the African race had been subjected, through the institution of slavery, even in the Republican government of the United States. The wise policy of the President has changed our action ; and two hundred thousand persons formerly held as slaves now wear the livery of the republic and rally beneath its starry banner. Thus far, wherever an opportunity has been presented they have illustrated the highest physical endurance, the most perfect subordination, and the most heroic courage. Shall this experience be lost upon ourselves ? Shall the millions of slaves in the South become champions of freedom and aid in sustaining the constitutional cause, or shall the rebel authorities re-invigorate their depleted legions and indefinitely protract the rebellion by this new accession of strength, if they are permitted to enrol them into their armies ? That question will be decided by the failure or passage of the contemplated amendment by the present Congress. What number of slaves under the promise of emancipation are now in the rebel ranks is to us unknown. But if from this class, the rebel authorities are to replenish their exhausted legions, how long will they be enabled to prosecute this terrible internecine war ? All then, who are in favor of perpetuating the strife and desirous of seeing this slaughter protracted—all who are willing to see the youth of the republic in their early manhood, laid on the altar of this fratricidal conflict, will resist the measure pending in the House of Representatives, for an amendment to the organic law, which removes for ever from the body politic this refractory element of our existing civilization.

FOUNDERS OF THE REPUBLIC.

By the eradication of slavery from the body politic, we shall restore the government to the policy on which its foundations were laid, and its prosperity based.

The framers of the government found it recognized in the Colonies having existed since the first settlement of the country ; but they regarded it a great social, moral and political evil, and confidently expected its disappearance from our system. In the original draft of the Declaration of Independence by Mr. Jefferson, the most grievous of all the charges alleged against the British King, was—

“He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never, offended him ; captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. This piratical warfare, the opprobrium of *Infidel* powers, is the warfare of the *Christian* King of Great Britain. Determined to keep open a market where **men** should be bought and sold, he has prostituted his negative, for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit, or to restrain, this execrable commerce. And that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact of distinguished die, he is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which he has deprived them by murdering the people on whom he also obtruded them, thus paying off former crimes committed against the *liberties* of one people, with crimes which he urges them to commit against the lives of another.”

These were the real opinions of Mr. Jefferson, and were only stricken out by the Continental Congress before signature, to appease South Carolina and

Georgia, the former of whom was still willing to remain a dependency of Great Britain.

Slavery and rebellion are identical; sustain the former and you protract the latter—extirpate the former and the rebellion totters to its fall. There have been other evils in our political system, but they have gradually disappeared before our civilization and the interests of the people. Slavery involved us in war with Mexico, and it has frequently threatened to involve us in war with foreign governments.

We delight in honoring the men of the revolutionary period. We do but simple justice when we allege that the framers of the Constitution were not surpassed by any other body known to history. But how impossible for human vision to anticipate human action, in the future, is illustrated by what they anticipated in reference to slavery, and what has actually transpired. The Statesmen of that day placed themselves on record, as believing that the institution of slavery would quietly disappear from the body politic. In the Constitution they provided that after the year 1808, the importation of slaves should be forever prohibited. This action conclusively proves what were their anticipations.

THE COTTON GIN.

And but for the introduction of the Cotton Gin—that emanation of genius from a Northern mechanic—slavery in the South would have disappeared under the law of self-interest, as it had previously done in the North. By the simple agency of this machine, with the rude and unskilled labor of slaves, cotton became an article of export, sufficiently powerful to regulate the commercial exchanges between the United States and the great marts of Europe; and then this institution came to be a controlling element in our national legislation.

THE COALITION.

But even the benefits secured through the labor of the slave and the genius of the Northern mechanic, would have been incomplete for any harm, if those landed proprietors of the South, owning their dependent slaves, had not been able to form a coalition with the laboring masses of the North, forming a political combination, which, for three-fourths of our political existence, has controlled our entire political legislation. Viewing this coalition with the lights before us, we are at a loss to discover what sympathy or interests existed between the large landed proprietor of the South, whose means of subsistence are wrung from the toil and sweat of his dependent slaves, and that humble, energetic, industrious laborer of the North, the support of whose family is contingent on his individual exertions. Coalitions are usually founded on kindred interests and the supposed benefits that are to result from the combination. But what possible advantages could come to the Northern laborer, in forming a coalition which placed him on a par with slavery, it is impossible for reason to conceive. But, unreasonable as was that coalition, it is by no means as monstrous as the anomaly, that, in this Christian age, in view of our present bitter experience, in view of the hundreds of thousands of fresh and unsodded graves, which this institution has so recently made, in view of the ravages which the war has occasioned, that there is still in the Congress of the United States, a single man sufficiently bold and audacious, to oppose, in any manner, the earliest and most thorough eradication of this pernicious system of slavery from our body politic.

PARTY CLAIMS.

Motive invariably precedes action. But what motive could exist for the perpetuation of a system that has already produced such unnumbered evils? I know the power and tyranny of party,—I recognize its imperious demands; I know full well how men hesitate to break its shackles, how difficult to sever associations. But how infatuated must that man be who, amid the blazing light of this century and its advancing civilization, desires to perpetuate an institution which has brought upon the country the terrible calamities through which we are now passing.

SEPARATE STATE ACTION.

It is vehemently urged by many who are willing to secure the proposed result, that it can best be effected by independent State action; and they point, in support of this opinion, to the proceedings of the conventions in the border States, that have recently expunged slavery from their Constitutions. So fundamental an act, completely changing the entire social, political and industrial status, of four millions of slaves, demands and expression from the whole people. This is particularly desirable in reference to public opinion in Europe. The governments and people in Europe only know the Government and people of the United States; they understand our States are mere local divisions. Whenever a citizen goes abroad, and is obliged to seek protection, he never asks it in behalf of a State—one of the integral portions of the Union,—but because of his relations to the Federal Union. Until this accursed rebellion, it was enough to secure protection and hospitality in every quarter of the globe, to aver you were a citizen of the Republic of the United States.

STATE RIGHTS.

The rebellion itself may be traced to the undue importance heretofore awarded the powers and rights of the States in the Federal Union as inculcated, by the pernicious doctrines of Mr. Calhoun for the last two generations, and through which he weakened the affection of his adherents for the general government. Justly tracing an intimate relation between these evil counsels and slavery, as the cause of the war, the recent constitutional convention in Missouri, while for ever abolishing the latter from their political system, declared in their Bill of Rights—

“That all political power is vested in and derived from the people, is founded upon their will only, and instituted for the good of the whole; that this State shall ever remain a member of the American Union, and that all attempts, from whatever source, upon whatever pretext, to dissolve said nation, ought to be resisted with the whole powers of the State; *that every citizen of this State owes paramount allegiance to the Constitution and Government of the United States, and no law or ordinance of this State in contravention thereof can have any binding force.*”

This enlightened action of the people of Missouri, who have felt the evils of the existing strife as severely as any other section, will doubtless be succeeded by similar action on the part of all the States, who have suffered by the rebellion, as they again seek the protection of the government of the United States. They intend to profit by their past experience; and they fully realize that the evils, whatever they may be, of

strengthening the Federal government, will be infinitely less, than those by which we are suffering from the pernicious notions hitherto prevalent of State sovereignty. No State should be vested with any power which gives colour of legality to acts of secession. Let us protect the States in all their delegated powers, make them sovereign within their orbit, but confine them to that orbit, and vest the residuum of power in the Government of the Federal Union, or reserve it to the people. A mere reversal of the relations, established by Article 10 of the existing Federal Constitution, would secure this result. This accomplished, with improved provisions in the Constitution, extending the law of treason, it is difficult to see when the institution of slavery shall cease to exist, from what source in the present, or any probable condition of our civilization, any real danger can come to threaten our peace or security.

ABROGATION OF RECIPROCITY TREATY.

I do not forget what has been the persistent, ungenerous, and unfriendly course of the two great western powers of England and France towards us since the breaking out of the rebellion; a course rendered more flagrant by Great Britain in view of the strict impartiality which we have always observed in our relations with that country, even when the storm of revolution has shaken her colonial dependencies on our frontier. Strict neutrality, and an aversion to entangling alliances with foreign states, has been a cardinal maxim with the American people ever since the origin of the government. This policy, early inaugurated by Washington, is the settled purpose of the American people. The abrogation of the Reciprocity Treaty with Great Britain, in reference to the Canadas, directly concerns the people of the State of New York, whose northern boundary for so great an extent, joins Canada, or looks out upon the waters of Lakes Erie and Ontario with the British possessions immediately opposite; and while British Statesmen are providing for a large additional force upon the lakes, it will be the dictate of a wise and provident legislation, to place there a force amply sufficient to see that no detriment comes to the Republic from that quarter. Facilities for passing our gunboats from Lake Ontario to Lake Erie, and from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi, are urgently demanded by the necessities of our position, while along the whole line of our Atlantic seacoast, from Savannah to Boston, the interior line of water communication, should be enlarged so as to be capable of passing our entire naval fleet, and merchant marine, free from the storms of the coast, and removed from an invading fleet, in the contingency of foreign war. This great result can be readily obtained by enlarging the locks of three short canals, of an aggregate length of seventy-eight and one half miles.

FAILURE OF THE REBEL CONFEDERACY.

The originators of the rebellion attempted to withdraw their respective States from the jurisdiction of the Federal Constitution, alleging the rights of their States were continually assailed under the Federal Government. They left the Federal Union to secure greater privileges for their States under the rebel Confederacy. What is the result? Where are the immunities that were to be secured to the revolted States? I speak not now of their relations to the United States, but of their relations to their

own so-called Confederate government. At this very moment, on the face of the entire globe, is there a more grinding, odious, military despotism than that which controls the Southern Confederacy. The rights of the State, the liberties of the citizen, all swallowed up in the central authority at Richmond, and that authority bartering away the very institution, to protect which, these States attempted to sever their allegiance from the Federal Government. Where are the Statesmen who inaugurated the rebellion, and who for many years previous had given direction to Southern sentiment? All ignored; and the Confederate Congress are even now deliberating on the policy of deposing the existing Presidential Rebel Chief, and giving absolute military dictation to their ablest military commander. Fearing that as our victorious armies advance, and the southern people again come to recognise the old flag under which they had so prospered in the past, it may prompt them to rally again beneath its folds; and that their State authorities may aid this result, a Resolution has passed the rebel congress, declaring it treason for any separate State to attempt a negotiation for peace, and the Rebel President has given it his earnest support. What a melancholy condition for a people who so recently enjoyed all the blessings of a free representative government, guaranteed by the Federal Constitution.

OUR OWN PROSPECTS.

At the origin of the rebellion very many men feared its suppression would cost us our national life, that a separation between the States was inevitable, that the Union must be dissevered, or, if we should escape this calamity, that the liberties of the people would be swallowed up in the ambition of some triumphant military dictator. Every day's experience only the more clearly demonstrates the fallacy of such apprehension. For the probability of any division of these States was never more remote than at this period, and is daily diminishing as our victorious armies under Grant, Sherman, Sheridan, Thomas and Terry, and our gallant navy, under Farragut, Porter and Dupont, continue to place our standards over the strongholds of the rebels, and where they supposed their strength was invincible.

Though the rebellion is not yet terminated, enough has already transpired to assure us that a single nation only, is to exercise jurisdiction over all the territory formerly embraced within the limits of the United States, and that here a homogeneous people—under republican institutions, recognizing universal freedom and individual political equality—will continue to furnish an asylum to the oppressed for the whole earth, and that here under one nationality the civilization of our race will secure its highest development.





